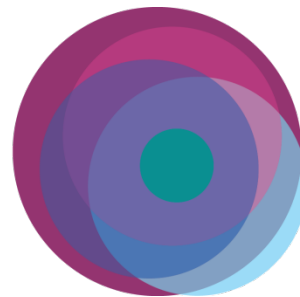




**Inter Faith
Week**
13-20 November
www.interfaithweek.org



PRESS RELEASE

21 November 2016

Inter Faith Week 2016 – a week with impact

The eighth annual Inter Faith Week drew to a close yesterday, Sunday 20 November.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK leads on the Week, and its Co-Chairs, Bishop Richard Atkinson and Jatinder Singh Birdi have said:

“The 500+ events that have taken part around the UK have sent a powerful signal about people of different faiths and beliefs working together for the good of our shared society and about the importance of positive inter faith relations. The Week has also highlighted the enormous contribution that those of all faith and belief communities make – in most cases through volunteering – to their local communities.”

The Week has seen an astonishing range of events and activities: multi faith remembrance events; faith trails and open door days; conferences and seminars on topics from tackling hate crime, to health and faith, and different faiths’ and beliefs’ understandings of particular issues; social action initiatives from help for refugees and the homeless to river cleaning and tree planting; football matches; music, dance, poetry and arts and craft workshops; school activities; quizzes; the launch of new initiatives; cookery sessions; exchange visits between places of worship of different faiths; a youth 'Interfaith Summit'; blog series; exhibitions; photographic and art competitions; campus programmes; dialogues on a wide range of topics; celebrations; and more.

Faith communities have taken part across the UK. They have hosted those of other faiths, journeyed with each other to visit each other’s places of worship; discussed responses to the challenging issues of the moment; contributed to social action projects to help their local communities; and taken active roles in civic and other markings of the Week. Locally, an increasing number of churches, gurdwaras, mandirs, mosques, synagogues, temples and viharas have thrown open their doors. People of non-religious beliefs have also been actively involved in many events.

Inter faith organisations have also played a significant role in the Week, from the UK's 250+ local inter faith groups, through to national inter faith bodies. A special event held at the Houses of Parliament by the All Party Parliamentary Interfaith Group with the Inter Faith Network for the UK on Tuesday 15 November explored local inter faith work and the importance of local inter faith bodies with inputs from Interfaith Glasgow, Faith Network for Manchester and the Redbridge Faith Forum. There was cross-party participation in the Week at both national and local levels. Both Communities Secretary Sajid Javid and Communities Minister Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth attended events.

This year has seen many public agencies getting involved in the Week: from local authorities, to emergency services. It has also had energetic involvement from a range of organisations from other sectors such as Sporting Equals and participation from many youth bodies such as Girlguiding and the Scouting Association. It has seen wide-scale involvement from schools, colleges and universities, museums and libraries, youth organisations, other voluntary and community bodies, and many more.

At the outset of the Week, £250,000 of 'small grants funding' was announced by Communities Minister Lord Bourne. The 'Common Good' programme will give pots of funding to projects that bring together diverse communities and different faiths through a range of activities from cookery classes to teaching computer coding.

Many event organisers and participants tweeted about the Inter Faith Week activities they took part in, and tweets about the Week have had a potential reach of over 5.5million Twitter users with over 18.5million impressions. Many tweets linked to the Week can be seen on the @IFWeek twitter feed.

Scottish Interfaith Week

This year Scottish Interfaith Week, which has taken place since 2004, took place on the same dates as Inter Faith Week. It, too, has had a very high impact week. Inter Faith Week, which owes its inspiration to Scottish Interfaith Week, was represented at its launch and Interfaith Glasgow took part in the APPG and IFN event.

A special Inter Faith Week inspired publication published today

To assist people who have attended an Inter Faith Week event and would like to get more involved, the Inter Faith Network has today published a new booklet, *Inter faith learning, dialogue and cooperation: Next steps*. The booklet includes information and pointers about different ways to get further involved with inter faith activity. A copy accompanies this press release and it can also be downloaded from the Inter Faith Week and Inter Faith Network websites.

ENDS

NOTES

1. The Inter Faith Week website carries more information and resources: www.interfaithweek.org and a list giving examples of the range of events which took place will be added to www.interfaithweek.org/press
2. The Inter Faith Network office is happy to assist media with enquiries about the Week: 020 7730 0410 and Ashley.beck@interfaith.org.uk
3. Inter Faith Week is a programme of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (www.interfaith.org.uk) It leads on the Week working with the Inter-faith Council for Wales (<http://interfaithwales.org.uk>), and the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum (<http://niinterfaithforum.org>) in relation to Wales and Northern Ireland.
4. Inter Faith Week has its own Twitter account www.twitter.com/IFWeek and Facebook page www.facebook.com/IFWeek
5. Inter Faith Week was established in England and Wales in 2009, and in Northern Ireland in 2010. Scottish Inter Faith Week has taken place since 2004 and is led by Interfaith Scotland (www.interfaithscotland.org). The dates of the Week are the same and events for all the four nations are included this year on the map on the Inter Faith Week website: www.interfaithweek.org/map
6. A number of events and activities were supported by the Near Neighbours programme of the Church Urban Fund, a programme supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
7. Sunday 27 November will be Mitzvah Day (www.mitzvahday.org.uk) - a Jewish-led day of social action involving people of all faiths and none working together in their local communities. Many events are being jointly held to mark both Inter Faith Week and Mitzvah Day and some of these will be taking place early, during the Week.
8. The Inter Faith Network for the UK was founded in 1987. It links in membership nearly 200 organisations including national faith community representative bodies; national, regional and local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with a focus on in inter faith or multi-faith issues. Its Co-Chairs are the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE and Jatinder Singh Birdi.
9. The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, the Department for Communities and Local Government, trusts, and other donors.
10. The Common Good funding programme of DCLG will be administered by the Church Urban Fund. Further information at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-to-boost-diverse-communities-during-inter-faith-week> and press.office@communities.qsi.gov.uk